BREAKING THE CYCLE
THE FOURTH PROGRESS REPORT

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy
2012 Annual Report

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Minister's Message

Four years ago, Ontario released the first Poverty Reduction Strategy in the province's history. The strategy is based on the belief that child poverty is not acceptable and that we have a responsibility to do our part to reduce the number of children living in poverty.

Following province-wide consultations, we developed a comprehensive approach focused on the roots of poverty and put forward a plan to fight it on many fronts so that every child – regardless of his or her background – has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

As Minister of Children and Youth Services, I am happy to lead our government's plan to reduce poverty in Ontario and to provide this annual report to Ontarians about the progress we are making together.

When we launched the strategy, we set an ambitious target of reducing the number of children living in poverty by 25 per cent over five years. Despite the challenging economic times we have faced in recent years, our government has remained steadfast in its commitment to giving children opportunities to succeed in life, breaking down barriers for low-income Ontarians and working together with our community partners to build a stronger Ontario and a brighter future.

Ontario continues to make progress on achieving the key goal of the Poverty Reduction Strategy: 40,000 children have been lifted out of poverty since 2008.[1]

Our strategy is focused on breaking the cycle of poverty so that it does not become inter-generational. This is why it is so important for us to intervene early in children's lives to give them the best start and support them throughout their developmental stages to ensure that they reach their full potential as adults. Focusing on lifting children out of poverty is an investment in their future as well as an investment in Ontario's social and economic future.

The structure of this report follows the significant Poverty Reduction Strategy initiatives that are made available at every stage of a child's development to underscore the importance of the early and sustained approach to improve the lives and invest in the future of Ontario's children in need.

As part of our ongoing commitment to create greater opportunities for youth in need, we released *Ontario's Youth Action Plan* in August 2012 to support at-risk youth in building skills that will improve their lives and help them contribute to their communities. This plan builds on recommendations from the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence report.

We also know that when we better understand how youth develop, we can provide better support and services. Our *Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development*, released in June 2012, lays out age-appropriate interventions so that youth can stay on track.

To strengthen our social safety net, we completed the first in-depth review of social assistance programs in 20 years, by setting up the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. In October 2012, the Commission reported back to the government on ways to remove barriers and increase opportunities for people to work.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy has become even more important in the face of one of the worst global economic downturns. Disadvantaged Ontarians would not have fared as well without our investments over the past four years.

[1] Ontario's fixed Low Income Measure poverty line is 50 per cent of the median adjusted household income measured in 2008 and adjusted for inflation for 2009 and 2010.

Our focus in recent years has been on tackling the province's deficit to protect the future of Ontario's social programs, which low-income families in particular depend on. But at the same time, we have remained committed to making investments to buffer families that are often the hardest hit during economic downturns.

I am proud of our achievements under the Poverty Reduction Strategy. To name a few:

- Raised minimum wage seven times in seven years
- Introduced the Ontario Child Benefit for low- to moderate-income families
- Strengthened employment standards
- Reduced taxes so that 90,000 low-income families are no longer paying personal income tax
- Invested in postsecondary education and training
- Helped low-income kids get free preventive dental care.

We are helping all children get the best start, helping low-income families and other Ontarians find jobs or upgrade their skills, and helping seniors stay in their own homes through property tax grants.

We know that poverty is a multi-dimensional and complex issue that cannot be addressed without collective action. Moving forward, our government will increase its efforts to create more partnerships across the not-for-profit and private sectors and across all levels of government, including the federal government, to help build communities with stronger safety nets and tools to help families rise out of poverty. Poverty is not a local or provincial issue. It touches all parts of our country.

I would like to thank and acknowledge those individuals and organizations in our communities who work tirelessly on behalf of people living in poverty. Your actions and leadership are realizing the vision of the strategy – where every person has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential, and to both contribute to and participate in a prosperous and healthy Ontario. We must all continue to work together to find lasting solutions and break the cycle of poverty.

I am pleased to present this report on the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and look forward to achieving continued success over the coming years.

The Honourable Laurel Broten
Minister of Children and Youth Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its fourth year, the Poverty Reduction Strategy continues to make a real difference in the lives of children, youth and families from low-income backgrounds in Ontario. Through the strategy's multi-pronged focus, the government is breaking the cycle of poverty by providing a range of supports and tools for disadvantaged children and youths so they can reach their full potential.

The government has committed to intervene early in the lives of young people in need to give them the best start and we continue to support them throughout their developmental milestones. In this way, we are investing in their future, helping them to become independent adults who can contribute to building stronger communities and a stronger Ontario.

The Early Years

Intervening in the early years – from birth to age four – is pivotal in breaking the cycle of poverty. Providing supports that lead to early success builds the path to future success. Key initiatives under the strategy focused on the early years include:

- In April 2012, Ontario announced additional funding to support **child care modernization** – bringing the government's investment in child care to more than $1 billion – an increase of 90 per cent since 2003-04.
- Through investments in **child care**, nearly 43,000 more children are receiving fee subsidies each year since 2003. High-quality child care better prepares children to transition to school, as well as allows their parents to seek employment.
- Increasing the number of **Parenting and Family Literacy Centres** in high-needs neighbourhoods to provide young children with programs that help them transition more easily to kindergarten.
- The continued roll out of **full-day kindergarten**, which is available to about 122,000 students in approximately 1,700 schools during the 2012-13 academic year. Full-day kindergarten gives children a stronger start in school, which is particularly important to the future of children from low-income backgrounds.

The Middle Years

During the middle years of childhood – age five to 12 years – children from disadvantaged backgrounds face additional challenges to succeed in school. Important initiatives that address this stage of child development include:

- Expanding the **Student Nutrition Program** to ensure children are properly nourished so they can focus and concentrate in school. More than 630,000 children and youth were participating in student nutrition programs in 2011-12, compared to about 186,000 in 2004-05.
- Investing in the **Children in Need of Treatment and Healthy Smiles Ontario** programs has resulted in more than 97,000 children and youth receiving free dental care between October 2010 and October 2012. Addressing dental issues helps to remove health challenges today as well as future barriers to well-being.
- Investing $12.5 million for the 2012-13 **After School Program** to provide school-aged children and youth with access to free, safe and healthy activities between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Having access to high-quality, supervised activities increases opportunities for active, healthy living and helps avoid high-risk behaviours.

Adolescence

Adolescence is a crucial stage for acquiring and building skills that contribute to future success. Ontario provides teenagers from low-income backgrounds with a number of supports and opportunities that build their confidence so that they can achieve success including:

- **Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development**, released in June 2012, provides information on how youth develop across four developmental domains (cognitive, emotional, social and physical) and how those who work with youth can support their positive development.
- The **Youth Action Plan**, released in August 2012, builds on our existing investments in youth made through the Youth Opportunities Strategy to provide youth at-risk with access to additional experiences to improve their lives and help them contribute to their communities through outreach, job opportunities, mentorship and recreation. The plan makes new investments in 20 initiatives, including a commitment to develop a long-term Ontario Youth Strategy.
- Investing in the **Pathways to Education** initiative that helps students in high-needs neighbourhoods graduate from high school and go on to college, university or learn a trade. The initiative currently involves more than 3,500 students – many who are the first in their families to receive a postsecondary education.
- The **Urban and Priority High Schools** initiative, which currently supports 34 urban high schools in 12 school districts to provide programs that help students with a range of challenges including poverty, academic struggles and gang-related activity.
- The **Crown Ward Success Strategy** that supports youth in the care of a children's aid society to complete high school, pursue postsecondary education, training and gain employment.

Early Adulthood

Young adults from low-income backgrounds may not look to the future with great optimism when they arrive at the stage where independence and opportunity should beckon. The strategy offers support to provide individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds with the skills and confidence they need to create pathways to a brighter future. These initiatives include:

- The **30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant** – introduced in January 2012, is helping students from low- to middle-income families gain access to a postsecondary education. For the 2011-12 academic year, more than 200,000 college and university students have received a 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant.
- **Life After High School** – a pilot program launched in the fall of 2011 in 87 schools in Ontario with low rates of students moving on to postsecondary education. The program provides these students with tools to better understand the benefits of postsecondary education and to access the information and supports they will need to pursue higher education.
- The **Ontario Student Assistance Program** – helps over 280,000 full-time and part-time students access postsecondary education. Non-repayable, targeted assistance is provided to students from modest-income backgrounds to encourage greater participation.

Opportunities for All

The Poverty Reduction Strategy is also focused on creating opportunities for all Ontarians to succeed. The strategy is very much about improving lives by addressing the complex range of needs faced by Ontarians from low-income backgrounds: secure housing, employment, upgrading skills, a stronger safety net, and tools and resources to help them rise out of poverty.

The strategy continues to provide initiatives that offer:

- Better access to affordable housing.
- Labour protection for vulnerable workers, including temporary workers and foreign nationals.
- Tax relief for low- to moderate-income Ontarians, including the Ontario Seniors Homeowners' Property Tax Grant, to help seniors pay their property tax.
- Training and employment supports, including help for laid-off workers trying to re-enter the workforce, foreign-trained professionals seeking a foothold and women at risk of domestic violence seeking independence.
- Greater accessibility for individuals with disabilities to increase their opportunities to gain education and employment.
- Support for the not-for-profit sector, which contributes to improving the lives of low-income Ontarians.
- Support for community and private sector partnerships to tackle key poverty reduction issues.

Looking Ahead

Through the Poverty Reduction Strategy, we are moving forward with:

- Discussions with our partners – both inside and outside of government – on the implications of transforming **Social Assistance** based on the recommendations from the **Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario**.
- The development of an **Ontario Youth Strategy,** which is a commitment in the Youth Action Plan. The Ontario Youth Strategy will articulate priorities for youth across a number of areas and identify outcomes and indicators of progress for Ontario's young people.
- The development of a new **Poverty Reduction Strategy** with specific targets to reduce poverty over the next five years. The new strategy will be informed in part by the recommendations from the final report from the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance, *Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario*. The government will also be consulting with Ontarians who are at higher risk of living in poverty to ensure their voices are reflected in the new strategy.

Concrete Gains Have Been Made

- Some 40,000 children have been lifted out of poverty since 2008.
- A single mother with a young child, working full time at minimum wage and accessing all available benefits was living above the poverty line in 2012. The same single mother would have been living below the poverty line in 2003.
- Without the strategy it is estimated that 77,000 more children would have been in poverty in 2010 and the low-income rate would have been nearly three percentage points higher.

Although much has been achieved, much more remains to be done. But we cannot do it alone.

Finding lasting solutions to poverty requires collective action from the community, not-for-profit and private sectors, as well as every level of government. Going forward, the fight against poverty must be taken on a national scale. Poverty is not confined to provincial borders.

Increased partnership with the federal government and the development of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy is required to best leverage our collective efforts to truly break the cycle of poverty.

INTRODUCTION

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

Our Vision

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy is guided by the vision of a province where every person has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential and contribute to and participate in a prosperous and healthy Ontario.

We have come far in four years. We have targeted the root causes of poverty and focused on breaking the cycle of poverty from one generation to the next.

Since our government launched the five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2008, our focus has been to intervene as early as possible in a young person's life to help mitigate some of the factors that put children from low-income backgrounds at a disadvantage. The earlier these issues are addressed, the greater the likelihood that children will have the tools they need to grow and develop and overcome the challenges of poverty.

The strategy is about investing in the future potential of Ontario's children and youth. To achieve this, we have developed initiatives that support children, adolescents and young adults at every stage of their development to help them reach their full potential.

The initiatives and programs under the strategy are wide ranging because poverty is complex and impacts on every aspect of an individual's life.

The strategy supports families by providing them with the skills and resources to better care for their children and provide them with opportunities to help lift them out of poverty.

We are also helping to build stronger communities that can better support families in need and providing them with the skills and resources to improve their lives.

Ontario's Goal
Reduce the number of children living in poverty by 25 per cent over five years.

Over the past four years the Poverty Reduction Strategy has made a real difference in the lives of children, youth and families living in poverty.

- Some 40,000 children have been lifted out of poverty since 2008.
- We are providing the Ontario Child Benefit to over one million children in 530,000 families.
- Full-day kindergarten is available in 900 more schools in 2012 – for a total of about 1,700 schools – giving about 122,000 kids a full day of learning.
- We are providing free dental care to eligible children and youth from low-income families who have serious oral health problems and who may have gone untreated.
- We are investing $12.5 million for the 2012-13 school year in the After School Program to provide Ontario's children and youth in Grades one to 12 with access to free, safe and healthy after-school activities between the critical hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- We are helping many more Ontario students graduate from high school and continue on to postsecondary education – many are the first in their families to do so.

Measuring Progress

The government made a commitment to report and track the progress of the impact of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. To help us do so, we developed a set of indicators, which collectively paint a more complete picture of the strategy's impact over time. The indicators look at poverty from a variety of dimensions, such as income levels, education, health, housing and standard of living.

Indicators of Opportunity

Here are the eight indicators:

1. School Readiness
2. High School Graduation Rates
3. Educational Progress
4. Birth Weights
5. Low Income Measure
6. Depth of Poverty
7. Standard of Living
8. Ontario Housing Measure

The Child and Youth Opportunity Wheel is a visual way to look at improvements in each of the eight indicators of opportunity over time. The inside circle represents the starting point in 2008. The spokes going out from the centre measure progress. The further the spoke is from the inner circle, the greater the improvement. We have made gains in all the key indicators. For more information on the Child and Youth Opportunity Wheel, see page 6.

The strategy is making a difference in the lives of Ontarians and helping break the cycle of poverty.

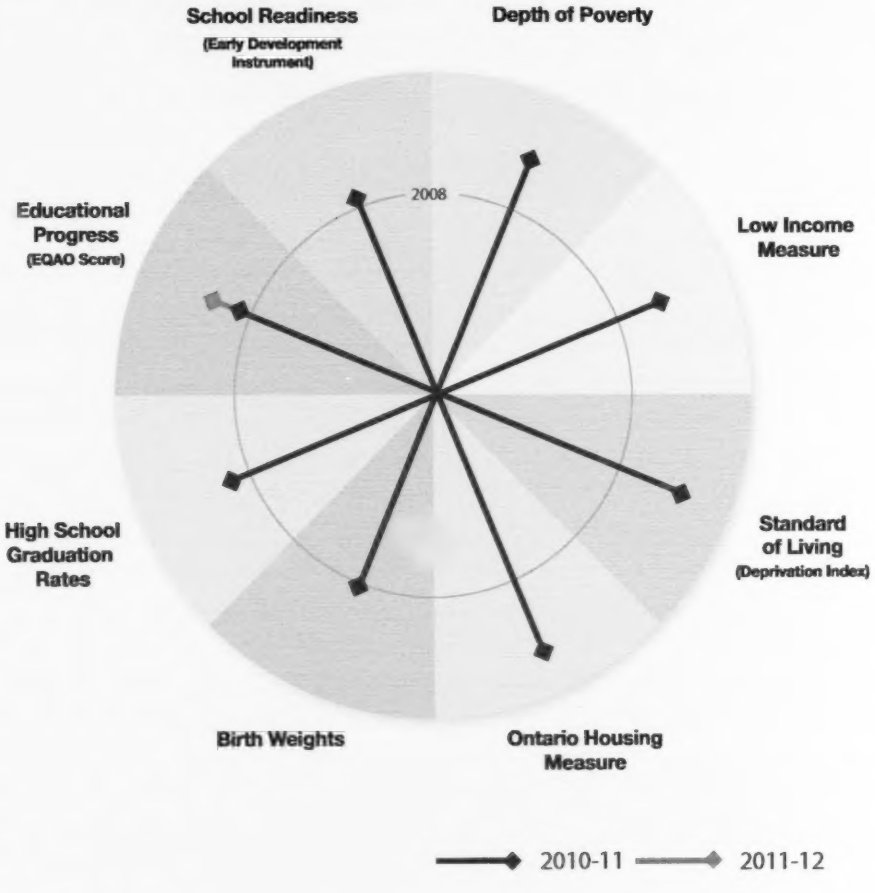
Change that Matters

Ontario's high school graduation rate increased to 82 per cent in 2010-11, compared to 68 per cent in 2003-04.

Did You Know?

Ontario's postsecondary participation rate is currently 64 per cent – one of the highest in the world.

The Child and Youth Opportunity Wheel



Did You Know?

The Poverty Reduction Act was passed with unanimous support from all parties in the legislature on May 6, 2009. It commits successive provincial governments to act on poverty and track progress over time.

Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Strategy			Launch of PRS	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	OVERALL TREND
Indicator	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	
Birth Weights*	80.0%			80.7%			Progress
School Readiness* (Early Development Instrument)	71.5%			72.4%			Progress
Educational Progress** (Combined Grade 3 and Grade 6)			67.0%	68.0%	69.0%	70.0%	Progress
High School Graduation Rates			79.0%	81.0%	82.0%		Progress
Low Income Measure			15.2%	14.6%	13.8%		Progress
Depth of Poverty			8.5%	7.3%	7.1%		Progress
Standard of Living (Deprivation Index)			12.5%	8.7%	9.9%		Progress
Ontario Housing Measure			5.4%	5.0%	4.2%		Progress

Notes: *Reported on a three year cycle.
**Educational Progress (EQAO) scores for 2011-12 were released in Summer 2012. Other 2011-12 data will be available in 2013.

The Early Years (Birth to four years)

To break the cycle of poverty, it is essential to support children to reach their full potential at every stage of their development.

Children from low-income families come into the world facing increased barriers and challenges, so it is essential to take early steps to improve their future chances of success. Helping disadvantaged children early in their lives gives them more chances to thrive.

Here are the programs that are making a difference in the early years:

Did You Know?

Over one million children in 530,000 families in Ontario receive the Ontario Child Benefit.

Since the Ontario Child Benefit is available to low-income parents, whether they are working or not, the benefit helps make it easier for some parents to leave social assistance.

Ontario Child Benefit

From the time a child is born, the Ontario Child Benefit begins helping low-income families to pay for expenses that otherwise may have been unaffordable. The Ontario Child Benefit provides parents in need with financial support for all their children up to 18 years of age.

The Ontario government committed to increase the maximum annual payment for the Ontario Child Benefit to $1,210 per child in 2013 and to $1,310 per child in 2014 – a growth of $210.

In 2013 and again in 2014, families currently receiving the Ontario Child Benefit will see an increase in their benefits and new families will become eligible. Together, these increases will benefit an additional 90,000 children in 46,000 families.

Did You Know?

Work is now underway to modernize the child care sector to enhance quality, accessibility and coordination, and make services more seamless for children and families.

In June 2012, the government released a discussion paper, Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together, to present a long-term vision for child care and seek feedback on medium term actions. Advice provided by a broad range of stakeholders and partners will help transform the system in the months and years ahead.

Child Care

In April 2012, Ontario announced additional funding to support child care modernization – bringing the government's investment in child care to more than $1 billion – an increase of 90 per cent since 2003-04.

About 43,000 more children are receiving fee subsidies each year since 2003. Eligibility for fee subsidies was expanded and this means that families who earn under $20,000 are eligible to have their child care fees fully subsidized.

Why It Matters

High-quality and affordable child care is very important to the well-being of low-income families. Having access to child care allows parents to work, while knowing their children are being looked after in a safe and engaging environment.

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres

These centres are located in schools in high-needs neighbourhoods. Their services are free to families and no registration is required. Children from birth to six years of age participate together with their parents/caregivers in a range of play-based learning activities that focus on early literacy, math and social skills. The programs offered help children transition more easily to kindergarten.

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres are frequently the first entry point for many families entering our school systems.

They come into a space that is warm and welcoming and create an atmosphere of home. This is where the community comes together. This is where our most isolated families manage to make connections, meet friends, meet family and create families within the school community.

Ruth Sischy, Manager and Policy Advisor, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Toronto District School Board

There are currently 155 centres across Ontario and an additional 17 centres are being added during the 2012-13 school year.

Why It Matters

Early success in literacy and numeracy contributes to continued achievement throughout the school years. Successful students have greater future employment opportunities and earning potential.

From September 2011 through June 2012, there were about 542,000 child visits to the centres – a 14 per cent increase compared to the same time period the previous year.

The government is committed to increasing the number of centres to 300 over time.

To find a Parenting and Family Literacy Centre near you visit http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/pflc.html.

Full-Day Kindergarten

Full-day kindergarten supports early learning and child development. It gives children a stronger start in school and in life, which is particularly important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Why It Matters

Full-day kindergarten is one of the best investments that can be made in young children. It is among the early interventions that can reap significant returns in the future prosperity of individuals and the province.

About 122,000 students in approximately 1,700 schools are benefiting from full-day kindergarten during the 2012-13 school year. This is an increase of 900 schools compared to September 2011.

Full-day kindergarten will be available to all of Ontario's four- and five-year-olds in publicly funded schools by September 2014, benefiting about 250,000 children.

The full-day kindergarten program gives Grace an early start. The fact that she is in full-day kindergarten, where she gets to learn in a structured environment, is very beneficial to her.

Also, as a full-time working mom, the full-day kindergarten's hours work for me. Not to mention the financial benefit of the cost savings in child care.

Grace's math and reading skills definitely have improved a lot. She is also more aware of social-environmental issues. For instance, she is recycling at home and she loves to protect animals and is reading all kinds of books.

Janet Yao, Mother, Toronto, Ontario

Change That Matters

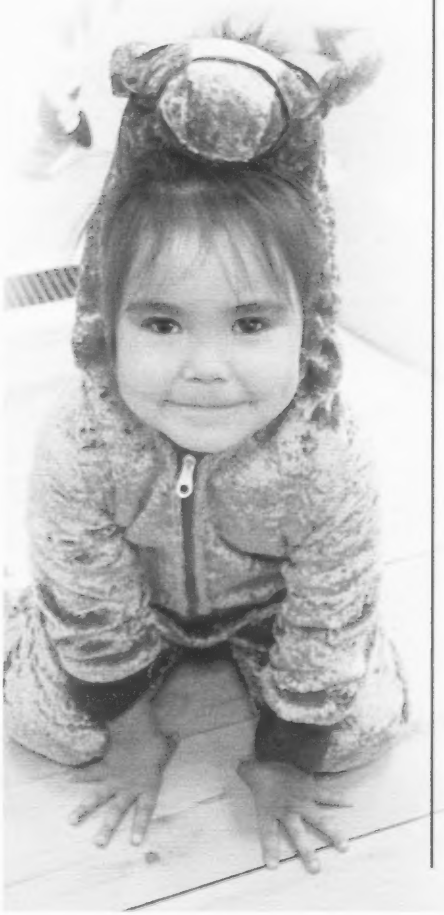
With full-day kindergarten, parents may save up to $6,500 a year per child on child care expenses.

Did You Know?

One in six children has a vision problem that is significant enough to impair their learning.

Uncorrected vision can reduce a child's fine motor skills (impacting writing and drawing abilities), cause difficulty in reading, reduce attention span, and lead to decreased self-esteem.

It can result in frustration with learning, a slower learning pace, and being mischaracterized as a problem learner.



Eye See...Eye Learn

Eye See...Eye Learn offers free eye exams to students in junior kindergarten at participating schools. If glasses are needed, they are also provided for free. The program was launched as a pilot in 2009-10 and continues to expand.

More than 2,400 eye exams were given to junior kindergarten students between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012.

More than 117,000 junior kindergarten students will be receiving free eye examinations when the program is fully rolled out to all of Ontario's district school boards by 2015.

Why It Matters

The Ontario Association of Optometrists cites that 93 per cent of children under the age of five have never had their eyes examined by an optometrist.

Encouraging eye exams for junior kindergarten students results in vision disorders being detected earlier, and reduces the impacts uncorrected vision can have on early learning.

Best Start Child and Family Centres

This initiative is a collection of projects and activities that are working to improve child and family services with the goal of supporting the best possible outcomes for young children.

The focus of the work in 2011-12 to support the initiative was the Community Action Research project. This project is a collaborative approach to work with, and learn from, communities to develop innovative strategies to support optimal healthy child development outcomes.

The other core project in 2011-12 was the development of a collaboration website for partners in the child and family services sector. This site is helping to:

- Build a common language to facilitate effective planning and collaboration across the sector
- Effectively share information related to Community Action Research projects
- Provide a forum for communities to share promising ideas and strategies
- Maintain an open portal for communities to provide feedback to the ministry.

Why It Matters

When service providers in the community are more connected they are able to provide better support to families and help children reach their full potential.

The Middle Years (Five years to 12 years)

The middle years are a time of rapid transition for children. They are learning about themselves and the world around them. In school, these are the years when knowledge and life skills are being acquired that will serve them in future years.

A child from a low-income background may face additional challenges during these years. Attending and concentrating in school can be very difficult if you do not have enough to eat. Children from disadvantaged families may not have supervised care after school or access to activities and basic services.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy offers a number of initiatives specifically aimed at supporting children during these critical years to give them the best opportunity to reach their full potential.

Student Nutrition Program

This initiative provides healthy breakfasts, snacks and lunches in schools and community agencies to children in communities across Ontario. It ensures that children have nutritious food to eat to so they are better able to learn at school.

The number of children and youth participating in student nutrition programs increased to over 630,000 in 2011-2012, compared to about 186,000 in 2004-05.

In the 2011-12 school year, there were 4,172 student nutrition programs in Ontario.

Our government increased the investment in nutrition programs to $17.9 million in 2008 to expand into more high-needs communities.

Did You Know?

In some low-income communities, as many as 68 per cent of students were coming to school without eating before they had access to a nutrition program.

Children in Need of Treatment/Healthy Smiles Ontario

These initiatives give children from low-income families access to needed dental services. The services range from basic dental treatment and prevention to urgent oral health care for children and youth.

Why It Matters

Having access to needed treatment is helping to address such problems as rotting or missing teeth, which can affect a child's overall health and a young adult's success in seeking and finding employment.

As of October 2012, about 32,955 children and youth had received free dental care through Healthy Smiles Ontario since October 2010.

From October 2010 to October 2012, 64,124 children and youth with serious oral health problems received access to needed services through the **Children in Need of Treatment** dental program.

As a dentist practising in a city clinic dedicated to patients with minimal economic resources, I have seen innumerable times how the Children in Need of Treatment dental program has made a positive impact on children.

Dr. Thompson,
Public Health Dentist – Ottawa

Did You Know?

Active and healthy after school activities help to:

- *Decrease childhood obesity*
- *Support healthy eating*
- *Increase physical activity*
- *Improve school success*
- *Reduce youth violence*
- *Reduce childhood poverty*

After School Program

The government is investing $12.5 million for the 2012-13 After School Program to provide school-aged children and youth (ages six to 18) access to free, safe and healthy activities between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. The program increases the opportunities for children and youth to be more physically active and learn about healthy living. Participants in the program also receive assistance with homework and participate in cultural activities such as drumming, and dance and cooking experiences.

Over 122 organizations are providing after school programming in 381 sites in Ontario during the 2012-13 school year. The program serves approximately 18,000 children and youth on an annual basis.

The program includes 30 per cent physical activity, 20 per cent nutrition education/healthy snack and 20 per cent health and wellness. The remaining time is used at the organization's discretion.

Why It Matters

Children benefit from being engaged in a variety of constructive activities during the critical after school period. Children and youth are not currently reaching the physical activity guidelines for optimal health. This program provides participants with between 162 and 216 minutes per week of physical activity. The participants who attend the program are receiving a healthy snack after school and education on food preparation. These children and youth then return to their homes and are able to assist with meal preparation. Increasing leadership skills and being provided with mentors helps to ensure these participants are able to cope with life situations and contribute to the well-being of their communities.

Summer Learning Programs

Since 2010, the Summer Literacy Learning Program has been piloted in Ontario district school boards to determine the effects of a summer literacy learning program for primary students. The project identified, invited and recruited students who would have fewer opportunities for diverse summer learning experiences to work on literacy skills in an enriched environment.

Data suggests that summer learning loss is widespread amongst students who face various challenges to learning. These programs have minimized summer learning loss for many students.

In 2012, 90 classes within 37 district school boards were engaged in these summer learning programs.

In 2012, a small number of pilot programs were also focused on numeracy as well as literacy for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.

Aboriginal Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Child Nutrition Program

The program is delivered in 180 Aboriginal communities, both on- and off-reserve, to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and support children and families coping with the challenges of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The services are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner to respond to local needs.

In 2011-12, the Aboriginal Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Child Nutrition Program served 31,802 clients and held 1,976 events for 42,769 participants.

Why It Matters

Addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is helping to improve the lives and future potential of affected individuals.

Schools participating in nutrition programs under the initiative have observed improvement in students' ability to concentrate as well as their academic performance.

Akwe:go Urban Aboriginal Children's Program

This program – aimed at children seven to 12 years of age – addresses the mental, physical and emotional health and wellness of Aboriginal children in a culturally relevant and holistic way. It provides at-risk children who are living off-reserve with supports, tools and activities that help them make better healthy lifestyle choices.

In 2011-12, the Akwe:go Urban Aboriginal Children's Program served 822 clients and had 2,450 participants.

Did You Know?

Akwe:go is a Mohawk word meaning "everybody" or "all of us." The Akwe:go Urban Aboriginal Children's Program is delivered by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres at 29 Friendship Centre sites and one alternative site.

Adolescence (13 to 18 years)

The adolescent years are a time of questioning and searching for a sense of identity for many youth. Peer groups become increasingly important as teens are just looking to fit in and find a place where they belong. Self-esteem issues may become particularly acute at this stage of development.

It is important that teenagers have mentors and supports at this stage that can help guide them to make healthy choices and to enhance their own skills and talents to achieve success.

But teenagers from low-income backgrounds often lack supports and opportunities to help build their self-esteem and their confidence so they can achieve their potential. Key initiatives of the Poverty Reduction Strategy focus on supporting youth from high-needs backgrounds to recognize their skills, develop their potential and help them focus on achieving success in school and other areas of their lives.

Expanding Opportunities for Youth – Ontario's Youth Action Plan

The government recognizes that it is important to develop a more integrated and comprehensive approach to supporting youth at risk. We are particularly committed to tapping into resources in communities and the private sector because we all have an important role to play in supporting youth to reach their full potential.

There are still significant segments of Ontario's youth population – particularly those from minority ethnic and racial backgrounds – who are coping with real challenges and barriers to succeed and contribute to society.

The **Youth Action Plan** was released in August 2012 and demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment to create greater opportunities for youth at-risk and provide them with access to experiences that can build their confidence and skills and instil in them the belief that they have the capability to improve their lives and contribute to their communities.

The plan builds on the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence report and on previous investments in youth through the Youth Opportunities Strategy. It also responds to the feedback received by the government over a 30-day consultation period. Young people, families, community and business leaders shared their thoughts and ideas on how to build safer communities and a brighter future for young Ontarians. The Youth Action Plan will benefit an additional 13,000 young people each year by moving forward on 20 initiatives.

The government is expanding existing programs and creating new ones to better address the continued needs of at-risk youth and the communities in which they live. Steps we have taken include:

- Increasing the number of **Youth Outreach Workers** in priority communities. There are currently 62 youth outreach workers providing outreach and referral services to disadvantaged youth in seven communities, growing to 97 in nine communities.
- Expanding the **Summer Jobs for Youth Program** to include part-time job opportunities for youth throughout the year.

Did You Know?

The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence report was released in November 2008 and contained 30 recommendations on how to combat the underlying causes contributing to youth violence. Former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry and former MPP and Speaker of the House Alvin Curling conducted the review. In response to the report and its recommendations, the government has taken action to improve social conditions, address poverty, increase access to mental health supports, generate employment opportunities and develop an evidence-based resource to help coordinate the efforts of government ministries and agencies.

- Creating more opportunities for youth to work and connect with local police through the **Youth in Policing Initiative**.
- Tapping into the private sector to create internships, mentoring and job opportunities for youth through the launch of the **Private Sector Jobs Initiative**.
- Developing and launching a new $5 million annual **Youth Opportunities Fund** to support local community initiatives.
- Investing in more community initiatives to help crime prevention through the **Safer and Vital Communities Program**.

Change That Matters

This summer, more than 4,300 at-risk youth in 33 Ontario communities gained valuable work experience and learned new skills through the Youth in Policing Initiative and the Summer Jobs for Youth Program.

To make a lasting difference in the lives of youth we are working with our partners to develop a province-wide, long-term **Ontario Youth Strategy**. We want to ensure our collective actions are achieving the best results for young people.

To learn more details about the Youth Action Plan visit: http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/english/topics/youthandthelaw/youthactionplan/yap.aspx

Youth Outreach Workers

Being a youth outreach worker is rewarding every day. Youth will often come back and share their success stories with us: 'You know, Miss, that thing that you helped me with. You know, when you helped me write my resume and you connected me with the job person. I have a full-time job now.' Or, 'I got back in school. I'm on my way to my GED.' Some people who we support when they're writing their entrance letters to universities and their applications, they certainly come back and tell us, 'You know, I got in! I'm starting in January,' and, for us, that's it. That's the biggest success that we can have.

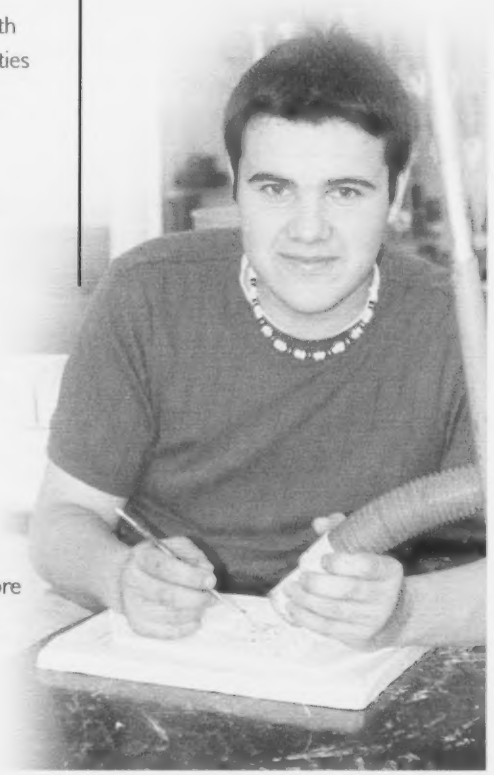
Robyn Forster, Yorktown Child and Family Centre

Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development

Stepping Stones compiles research and input from youth experts, communities and youth themselves on how young people grow and develop, and what supports and opportunities they need to transition successfully into adulthood.

Based on recommendations from the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence report, Stepping Stones was created in broad consultation with researchers, youth, community leaders and service providers and is designed to support those who work with youth. The government is providing this resource to partners across government and in the community through speaking engagements and the creation of new, user-specific tools.

To read Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development visit: http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/youthopportunities/steppingstones/youth_policy.aspx



Youth Challenge Fund

The Youth Challenge Fund was launched in February 2006 and through this initiative more than 12,000 at-risk youth in Toronto have gained valuable training and work experience, found safe places to meet and contributed in positive ways to their communities.

Focus on Youth

This initiative, delivered by school boards in partnership with community agencies, provides summer employment for youth and summer recreation activities for children and youth in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa and Windsor. As part of the Youth Action Plan, the government is investing an additional $1 million in the Focus on Youth initiative in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Greater Toronto Area.

Since 2007, the program has provided summer employment to 5,000 youth and summer recreational activities for over 100,000 children and youth.

Pathways to Education

This initiative focuses on mentoring and tutoring, and offers financial supports to help high school students from high-needs neighbourhoods achieve success.

The program is helping over 3,500 students stay in school, get the high school credits they need to graduate and go on to college, university or learn a trade.

More than 80 per cent of Pathways to Education graduates are now either attending college or university – more than 90 per cent are the first in their families to receive a postsecondary education.

Why It Matters

In Toronto's Regent Park, where the program initially started, 81 per cent of high school students graduate, compared to 20 per cent before Pathways began.

Did You Know?

An independent study finds Pathways to Education participants have experienced improved health. There are also fewer teen pregnancies and lower smoking rates.

Urban and Priority High Schools

The initiative invests $10 million annually in 34 urban high schools in 12 school districts, which are selected based on need and a specific action plan. The funds help these schools provide additional supports to help students with challenges, including poverty and gang-related activity.

There has been a significant improvement in the percentage of students achieving provincial level standard or higher in the Grade 9 EQAO applied math test. There has also been an improvement in Grade 9 and Grade 10 credit accumulation.

Urban and Priority High Schools have reported that the number of expulsions and students being suspended has decreased, more students feel safe in their school and their community, and parents are more engaged in school activities.

Did You Know?

Parent engagement in their children's education is a predictor of student success.

Because of the support and dedication of all those involved, I am graduating this year. This is something I never thought I could accomplish and I am 100 per cent sure I couldn't have done it without the support.

Lana - Grade 12 student at Catholic Central High School in Windsor

Source: UPHS Connections newsletter - June 2012

Specialist High Skills Major

The program offers high school students a chance to make the connection between their studies, the world beyond high school and their future careers.

In 2012-13, 38,000 Grade 11 and Grade 12 students are participating in over 1,450 Specialist High Skills Major programs in 670 schools.

Why It Matters

By engaging in career-related learning situations, students are better able to focus on graduating from high school and on pursuing their postsecondary goals – apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace.

The Specialist High Skills Major program requires students to earn between six to eight sector-recognized certifications (e.g., First Aid, Work Place Hazardous Materials Information System training). These certifications count towards earning the Specialist High Skills Major's red seal designation on their high school diplomas.

Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent

This provides funding for educational, recreational, cultural and social opportunities for children and youth in care of children's aid societies (Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent Activities Program) and a savings program for older youth in care (Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent Savings Program).

As of July 2012, a total of $59.3 million in Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent funding has been provided to children's aid societies.

In 2011-12, more than 12,000 children and youth participated in the Activities Program and over 2,100 youth received savings to support their transition to adulthood.

Youth participating in the Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent Savings Program receive financial literacy skills to help prepare them for independent living, and are provided with up to $3,300 in savings to assist with the costs of their basic needs upon leaving care.

Crown Ward Success Strategy

This strategy is aimed at helping youth in care of a children's aid society (Crown wards) complete high school and pursue postsecondary education, training and employment.

The strategy includes programs that support tuition grants, reimbursement for college and university application fees, and teams that partner with a range of organizations to help remove barriers to success for Crown wards.

In 2011-12, 348 students were awarded an **Ontario Access Grant for Crown Wards**. In addition, 83 Ontario Crown wards were reimbursed for postsecondary application fees through the **Ontario Crown Ward Postsecondary Application Fee Reimbursement Program**.

Why It Matters

Helping Crown wards to pursue postsecondary education will improve their chances of finding gainful employment and help them break the cycle of poverty.

Ontario has established 21 Crown Wards Championship Teams to help at-risk youth graduate from high school and pursue postsecondary education, training and employment.

"The postsecondary educational and training opportunities available to youth in care are not always immediately apparent, or easily accessible to them."

- Mehroon Kassam, chairperson of the Crown Ward Education Championship Team.

Kassam explains the unique challenges and struggles of Crown wards are significantly greater than those of an average teen or youth:

"This often creates what seem to be insurmountable obstacles on their path to success... Through this event [supporting youth in care to learn more about postsecondary opportunities] and with the accompanying supports of the local community and the Government of Ontario, we're confident our youth will be inspired to seek a postsecondary education and have a brighter future.

Source: Napanee Guide, October 24, 2012

Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011

The government amended the **Child and Family Services Act** to:

- Increase the number of Crown wards eligible for adoption.
- Expand the authorities of courts to approve open adoptions so that children can maintain contact with significant people in their lives.
- Allow vulnerable youth ages 16 or 17, whose court-ordered or formal customary care has expired, to receive voluntary services and supports until the age of 21.

Financial Subsidies

This initiative provides financial subsidies to eligible parents who adopt or take legal custody of Crown wards 10 years of age and over, or Crown ward siblings.

Youth Leaving Care Working Group

The Youth Leaving Care Working Group brings together youth with experience living in care and community partners from across the province.

This group is looking at ways to improve the lives of youth in care and help them as they transition out of care. They will submit an Action Plan to the Minister of Children and Youth Services in early 2013.

Did You Know?

Wasa-Nabin means "to look forward, to look beyond" in Ojibway. The Wasa-Nabin Urban Aboriginal Youth Program is delivered by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres at 29 Friendship Centre sites and one alternative site.

Wasa-Nabin Urban Aboriginal Youth Program

The program supports at-risk Aboriginal youths from 13 to 18 years of age, who are living off-reserve. The program focuses on the mental, physical and emotional health and wellness needs of these youths, and is delivered in a culturally relevant manner.

In 2011-12, the program served 683 clients and had 2,019 participants.

Open Minds, Healthy Minds: Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy

The strategy was launched in June 2011 with a focus on supporting children and youth in the first three years. It targets three key areas: fast access to high-quality services, early identification and support, and helping vulnerable kids with unique needs. Our investment started last year and will grow to $93 million annually when the strategy is fully implemented.

The ministries of Children and Youth Services, Education, Health and Long-Term Care, and Training, Colleges and Universities are working together in partnership to achieve the strategy's goals, which are to improve access to high-quality mental health and addictions services, strengthen the capabilities of workers, create a responsive and integrated system and build awareness and knowledge about mental health issues within communities.

The government is putting services on the ground to assist an estimated 20,000 more children and youth. This includes placing 600 more mental health workers in schools, communities and courts. These new workers are providing quicker and easier access to the right mental health services and supports.

The strategy will benefit as many as 50,000 kids and their families.

Some 144 nurses with mental health expertise have been allocated through Community Care Access Centres to provide direct services in schools to children and youth with mental health issues.

Mental health leaders have been placed in 30 district school boards. Enhancement of the education curriculum to address mental health promotion and eliminate stigma is underway.

Over 80 new Aboriginal Mental Health and Addictions Workers are being hired to support children and youth living in high-needs Aboriginal communities.

The government announced *Moving on Mental Health: A system that makes sense for children and youth* as part of the Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. This involves a plan to deliver a coordinated, responsive child and youth mental health system that is easy for parents to understand and navigate. The goal is to provide fast answers and clear pathways to services and more specifically to ensure early and appropriate help for each child and youth who needs it.

Why It Matters

Identifying mental health issues effectively and intervening early helps put children on the right track to better health and improves school attendance which supports academic achievement and future success.

Did You Know?

Seventy per cent of mental health problems first appear in childhood or adolescence.

Early Adulthood (18 years and beyond)

Young adults are on the verge of independence. They are intellectually and emotionally ready to take on new and more challenging opportunities. They are increasingly thinking about their future and carving out a place for themselves.

But a young adult who has been raised in a low-income household may not see their future as expansive or look to it with great optimism.

A high school diploma and postsecondary education are the best tickets to a better future. But disadvantaged individuals may not have the expectation or confidence to commit to graduating from high school and moving on to a postsecondary program. Feeling that higher education is out of reach, teens and young adults may not strive to achieve their full potential.

This is why the Poverty Reduction Strategy has many initiatives focused on supports for teens and young adults to pursue higher education and create pathways to a better future. Completing postsecondary education or apprenticeship training can unlock potential and help young adults break the inter-generational cycle of poverty.

Why It Matters

If more low-income students succeed in gaining a postsecondary education, it will greatly improve their employment opportunities, as well as give them other important life skills.

30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant

Through the 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant, introduced in January 2012, students from low- to middle-income families – whose gross income is less than $160,000 – are receiving help to pay for postsecondary education. The 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant will ensure postsecondary education remains accessible and affordable.

In the 2011-12 academic year, almost 200,000 college and university students have received an Ontario tuition grant. In the 2012-13 school year, it will save university or college degree students $1,680 and college diploma or certificate students $770 for two terms.

It is estimated that about 310,000 students will be eligible for the grant in the 2012-13 academic year.

Life After High School

A pilot program was launched in the fall of 2011 in 87 schools in Ontario with low rates of students moving on to postsecondary education. The program provides these students with tools to better understand the benefits and access to information and supports they will need to pursue postsecondary education. It also supports students with tools to research opportunities and help in completing applications, including paying processing fees.

About 7,500 Grade 12 students participated in workshops at 44 schools and more than 5,500 students submitted requests for payment of their college or university application fees.

Initial results show a 35 per cent increase in combined college and university applications coming from schools participating in the program.

Ontario Student Assistance Program

The Ontario Student Assistance Program assists students who do not have the money to pay for their postsecondary studies. The assistance is in the form of loans and grants. The Ontario Student Assistance Program reduces barriers and improves access to postsecondary education. This is significant to students from low-income backgrounds who face challenges in pursuing higher education.

A range of special grants target students with the greatest need. For students who receive Ontario Student Assistance Program loans, the government provides flexible repayment options.

Over 280,000 full-time and part-time students across Ontario annually receive Ontario Student Assistance Program support. Non-repayable, targeted assistance is provided to students from low-income backgrounds to encourage their participation in postsecondary education.

The number of Ontario college and university students qualifying for the Ontario Student Assistance Program has increased by 77 per cent from 2003-04 to 2011-12.

The Ontario Student Opportunity Grant caps annual student debt to $7,300 for a two-term academic year, which makes Ontario the only province in Canada to cap all student debt at a predictable amount each year.

Ontario Student Assistance Program – Interest Supports

All Ontario Student Assistance Program loans are interest free while students are studying. The Ontario portion of Ontario Student Assistance Program loans remain interest free for longer – until six months after graduation. Repayment starts six months after graduation.

For postsecondary graduates who take their first job in the not-for-profit sector, Ontario is extending the grace period to one full year for repaying student loans.

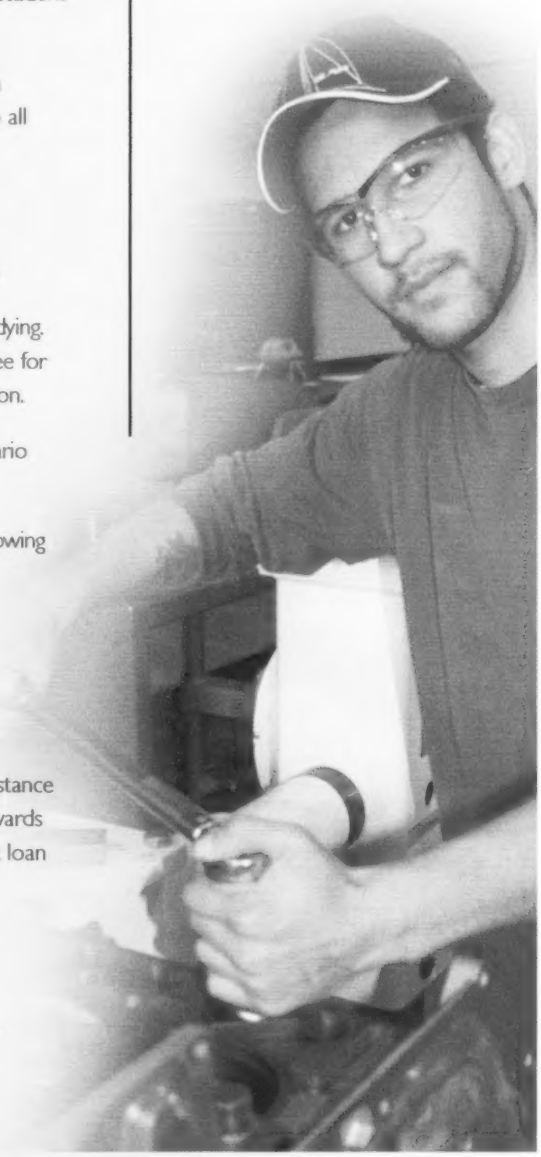
Ontario Student Assistance Program's interest subsidies keep students' debts from growing during the time they are in school.

Repayment Assistance Plan

Students who take out Ontario Student Assistance Program loans can access repayment support if they run into financial difficulties. Under the Repayment Assistance Plan, qualified borrowers pay no more than 20 per cent of their family income towards their student loans. In certain cases, borrowers may not have to make any student loan payments until their income increases.

The Repayment Assistance Plan ensures that the loan is repaid within 15 years (10 years for borrowers with permanent disabilities).

No graduate in financial difficulty will pay more than 20 per cent of family income for Ontario Student Assistance Program loan repayment and after 15 years, any remaining student loan debt will be forgiven.



Ontario Student Access Guarantee

For students with greater financial need than the Ontario Student Assistance Program covers, Ontario introduced the Student Access Guarantee.

Through this guarantee, Ontario requires colleges and universities that receive public funding to provide enough financial aid to cover a student's assessed needs for expenses directly related to his or her program, including books, tuition and mandatory fees, that are not fully met by the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

Aboriginal Student Bursary

The program provides Aboriginal students with financial assistance to access a postsecondary education.

The Aboriginal Student Bursary fund helped 855 Aboriginal students in 2009-10, more than 1,082 in 2010-11 and 1,153 in 2011-12 to access, participate and achieve their goals in postsecondary education.

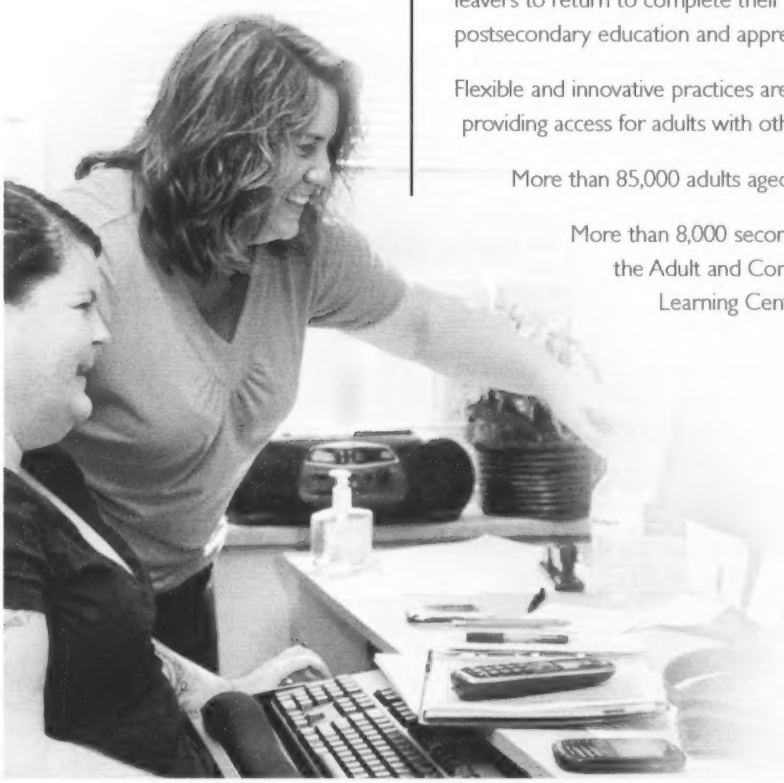
Adult Education

The Adult and Continuing Education program offered by district school boards in Ontario, and the Independent Learning Centre, provide opportunities for adults and early school leavers to return to complete their Ontario Secondary School Diploma and transition to postsecondary education and apprenticeship training.

Flexible and innovative practices are very effective in re-engaging at-risk students and providing access for adults with other responsibilities, such as child care and work.

More than 85,000 adults aged 18 and up participate in these programs annually.

More than 8,000 secondary school diplomas are granted annually through the Adult and Continuing Education program and the Independent Learning Centre.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Housing is one of our most basic needs. Here are the initiatives we have launched to assist Ontarians access a safe, secure and affordable place to live.

An Affordable Place to Call Home

Since 2003, our government has committed nearly $3 billion in affordable housing – more than any government before it.

Through **Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy**, the government continues to invest in a range of initiatives to ensure families in need have access to housing.

- Through the **Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario** program, the federal and provincial governments are investing $480.78 million over four years.
- The program will improve access to affordable housing that is safe, sound, suitable and sustainable for households across Ontario.
- This money will be used to create over 5,000 new jobs, and build and repair approximately 7,000 affordable housing units in Ontario.

The **Provincial Rent Bank Program** was created to prevent the eviction of tenants experiencing short-term rent arrears. In 2009, as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, we introduced stabilized funding for the Provincial Rent Bank Program. As of April 2012, total funding for this program reached $44.48 million since its inception in 2004. The program has assisted more than 32,100 households (as of December 31, 2011).

Since 2008, the **Infrastructure Ontario Loan Program** has provided over $450 million in loans to not-for-profit social and affordable housing providers to support projects valued at over $700 million. These projects have helped to reduce utility costs, improve energy efficiency, revitalize properties and improve the quality of life for tenants in communities across Ontario.

Beginning in 2012-13, the government will be providing $750,000 to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers over three years under the **Municipal Infrastructure Strategy** to improve asset management planning for social housing in small, rural and northern communities.

The **Residential Tenancies Amendment Act** (Rent Increase Guideline), 2012, was passed on June 13, 2012 to amend the annual Rent Increase Guideline formula. The government capped the 2013 and future annual guidelines at 2.5 per cent. The changes mean:

- About one million tenant households are being provided with more predictable and stable rents.
- Had this legislation not been introduced, the annual rent increase would have exceeded 2.5 per cent.

Why It Matters

Low-income Ontarians live on extremely tight budgets and every dollar saved counts, particularly when it involves basic expenses like housing.

Secure Affordable Housing Creates Possibilities

Mary-Anne is a single mother who has found a greater sense of independence and hope living in a rent-geared-to-income co-op in Aylmer. "My dream is homeownership. With changes to the way my rent is calculated, it will make it that much easier for me to do so."

Protecting Workers

The government is protecting vulnerable employees in Ontario's workforce. This includes protection for temporary workers without job security and newcomers, who may not understand their employment rights or where to seek assistance. We believe every Ontario worker should be treated fairly and be compensated for their labour.

Steps We Have Taken:

- The Ministry of Labour launched a pilot project to increase **Proactive Inspections** from July 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012. A group of ministry employment standards officers conducted a mix of pro-active and reactive workplace inspections.

Why It Matters

If both inspections and claims can be done effectively by the same employment standards officer, then more officers could be assigned to inspection files as a regular part of their work. More inspections could be completed overall, which would affect a larger number of employees. Inspections affect larger numbers of employees per employer than claims.

What Has Been Achieved:

- Two hundred and forty-two inspections and 734 claims were completed by 11 officers selected for the pilot project from all regions across Ontario.
- Over 4,000 employees benefited from these inspections, which resulted in the collection of $285,278 in outstanding wages.

Did You Know?

When vulnerable workers are protected and their work circumstances are made more secure and predictable, it enhances their ability to take care of their families' basic needs. Supports that help make workers more self-sufficient build stronger families and communities.

The government also focused increased attention on implementing the **Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act (Live-in Caregivers and Others) 2009**, which was passed to ensure that foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers are protected under provincial law. The Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, 2009 came into force on March 22, 2010.

Steps We Have Taken:

Between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2012, Ministry of Labour staff conducted 43 Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, 2009 related inspections and closed 56 claims under the new legislation. A total of $15,236 was recovered to benefit employees.

Did You Know?

The Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, 2009 prohibits recruiters from charging fees to foreign nationals working or seeking to work in Ontario as live-in caregivers. The act also regulates the activities of employers of foreign live-in caregivers, beyond what is already set out in the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

What Has Been Achieved:

- By banning all fees charged to live-in caregivers by recruiters, the legislation is reducing the need for prospective live-in caregivers to take loans (often at high interest rates) to cover the costs of getting employment in Ontario.
- By prohibiting the practice of taking a caregiver's personal documents, such as a passport and work permit, live-in caregivers can no longer be blocked from seeking new employment if necessary.

Steps We Have Taken:

- As part of a shift from complaint-based to proactive inspections, Ministry of Labour inspectors undertook the first-ever industry "blitz," in which many employers across an industry group are inspected to ensure their compliance with workers' rights under the Employment Standards Act such as minimum wage, overtime and vacation pay.
- In 2012, the blitz focused on the temporary help agency industry, on which many Ontarians rely for work. This not only returned wages into workers' pockets, it also supported the enforcement of Temporary Help Agency legislation, which came into effect in November 2009 and will result in better future compliance in this industry.
- Changes were also made to allow these workers to have better opportunities to accept direct employment from a client of the temporary help agency.

Did You Know?

*The **Employment Standards Amendment Act, 2009** (Temporary Help Agencies):*

Ensures that temporary help agency employees are treated fairly and enjoy the same rights as other employees. Regulatory changes have also given these employees the same public holiday rights as other employees, and rights to notice of termination and severance pay.

What We Achieved:

As a result of the enforcement push:

- More than 100 agencies were inspected from June to August 2012.
- As of August 2012, 495 temporary help agency claims have been resolved since the legislation came into force in November 2009.
- As part of the blitz, special information packages were created for employers and public information sessions were held.
- Workers at temporary help agencies are better informed about their employment rights.

Offering Tax Relief

Achieving our poverty reduction goals requires that we reduce the economic burden on low-income Ontarians by putting more money in their pockets so that they can provide for their families and successfully participate in the workforce.

Steps We Have Taken:

- **Ontario's Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth**, announced in 2009, is helping to attract business investment and create jobs through a more competitive tax system, and provides tax relief for people.
- Low- to moderate-income families and individuals are being better served by a more streamlined and consistent Ontario Trillium Benefit, a tax credit that combines the payments of three quarterly tax credits into a single monthly payment.

What Has Been Achieved:

- Nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers received a permanent tax cut in 2010.
- Ninety thousand low-income Ontarians were removed from the tax rolls altogether.
- Since 2010, enhanced relief for property and sales taxes has been provided through the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit and the Ontario Sales Tax Credit.
- Relief for the higher energy costs faced by residents of Northern Ontario has been provided since 2010 through the Northern Ontario Energy Credit.

Why It Matters

Over five years, the Ontario Senior Homeowners' Property Tax Grant is expected to provide about $1 billion in property tax relief to more than 600,000 seniors.

Did You Know?

Permanent refundable credits provide a total of $2.4 billion in annual assistance to millions of low- to moderate-income Ontarians.

- Ontarians started receiving payments of the Ontario Trillium Benefit in July 2012, which combines payments of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, Ontario Sales Tax Credit and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit.
- The Ontario Senior Homeowners' Property Tax Grant provides grants of up to $500 a year to help low- to moderate-income senior homeowners pay their property taxes.

To learn more details about the tax credits and the Ontario Trillium Benefit visit: http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/credit/otb/index.html.

Providing Access to Training and Employment Supports

The government continues to support a range of initiatives that help Ontarians access training and other supports to help them find gainful employment. Having a job is a basic requirement to gain self-sufficiency. We are helping individuals having difficulty finding employment in a range of circumstances.

We Are Helping:

- Long-time workers who have become unemployed and are struggling to re-enter the job market.
- Women who are seeking a job for the first time to support themselves and their young children.
- New immigrants who have the skills, but lack the Canadian experience, to find work in their field.

Why It Matters

By helping to build a more highly skilled and educated workforce, Second Career supports the human resources needs of employers and helps to build stronger communities.

Did You Know?

Employment Services are offered in more than 400 locations across Ontario. They provide clients with a "one-stop shop" where they can find an array of supports to help them find sustainable employment and better career opportunities.

Steps We Have Taken:

- The **Second Career Program** helps prevent laid-off workers from becoming chronically unemployed and slipping into poverty or lacking the tools to climb out.
- Laid-off workers are offered up to $28,000 of support for tuition, books, transportation and a basic living allowance, as well as other training-related expenses, to help them find a job in Ontario.

What We Have Achieved:

- Second Career funding was approved for 7,213 people in the 2012-13 fiscal year, as of October 2012.
- Forty-two per cent of Second Career clients found work as soon as they completed skills training and left the program and 64 per cent of clients found work within three months.
- More than 93 per cent of Second Career clients indicated that the skills training they received helped them to find employment.

Steps We Have Taken:

- Through **Employment Ontario Employment Service** the government is helping individuals improve their skills, find work and achieve their career goals. The program also helps to meet the skilled labour needs of employers.

What Has Been Achieved:

- Over 610,000 Ontarians accessed these services in the 2011-12 fiscal year. This number includes more than 460,000 clients provided with resources and information, and more than 150,000 assisted clients.

Steps We Have Taken:

- Through **Employment Training for Abused/ At-Risk Women**, the government is helping women who have experienced or are at risk of domestic violence develop new skills and find employment. The program invests about $2 million annually to assist women in need of rebuilding their lives.

What We Have Achieved:

- As of March 31, 2012, 250 women had completed their training.
- Of the 250 women who had completed training, 153 (61 per cent) had succeeded in finding employment or went on to further training and education.

Steps We Have Taken:

- The **Women in Skilled Trades and Information Technology Training Program** provides training to low-income women to learn new skills, earn good wages and create better futures for themselves and their families. The program helps women qualify for jobs in higher-paying, non-traditional occupations, moving them towards greater economic security.

What We Have Achieved:

- In 2011-12, 326 women participated in training through the Women in Skilled Trades and Information Technology Training Program. Approximately 80 per cent of women who have graduated from the program find employment, or pursue further training or apprenticeships, within six months of graduating. Over the next two years, approximately 350 additional women will be trained across Ontario through the Women in Skilled Trades and Information Technology Training Program.

Why It Matters

Supporting people to improve their skills to enter the job market or helping newcomers gain a foothold in the workforce adds to the overall pool of skilled workers in Ontario. Helping people to find gainful employment helps to lift them out of poverty and contributes to stronger communities.

Steps We Have Taken:

- The government is providing targeted, occupation-specific training and services to help internationally trained newcomers get licensed in Canada to work in their field of expertise through the **Bridge Training Programs**.
- Newcomers are also receiving help to learn more about the Canadian labour market and connecting with potential employers in their field.

What We Have Achieved:

- About 50,000 skilled newcomers have become licensed and found work in their field of expertise through the government investing more than $240 million in over 300 bridge training programs.

Did You Know?

There are 100 active bridge training programs for skilled professions and trades including: nursing, pharmacy, engineering, financial services, law, physiotherapy, social work and the skilled trades.

CONNECTING INTERNATIONAL SKILLS WITH ONTARIO OPPORTUNITIES

Karamjit came to Canada from India with a master's degree and international work experience in the field of chemical engineering, in May 2011.

Five months later, he joined the Group Mentorship for Immigrant Employment bridge training project managed by WIL Employment Connections in London, Ontario. The project brings participants and local London area employers together to establish mentoring, employment networking and volunteer work experience opportunities.

Thanks to the support he received through an Ontario Bridge Training Program, Karamjit was able to find employment in his field of expertise in less than one year after arriving in Canada.

"The Group Mentorship Immigrant Employment program at WIL Employment Connections helped me with networking, getting connected in my field and completing the necessary procedures to obtain employment in my field," Karamjit said. "I would definitely recommend this program to all newcomers."

Did You Know?

In November 2012 the government released Ontario's first immigration strategy, which was developed after reviewing recommendations from Ontario's Expert Roundtable on Immigration, as well as consulting with many sectors and stakeholders across the province.

The goal of the strategy is to make immigration work better for Ontario's economic development and better support immigrants and their families so they can succeed and fully contribute to Ontario's economic prosperity.

Making Ontario More Accessible

Steps We Have Taken:

- The government continues to implement the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005** with the aim of achieving an accessible Ontario by 2025.
- We have moved forward in developing accessibility standards in five key areas of daily living:
  - Customer Service
  - Information and Communications
  - Employment
  - Transportation
  - Built Environment (buildings and public spaces).
- Accessibility standards are the rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario will have to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

Did You Know?

Ontarians with disabilities have higher unemployment rates than those without disabilities: in 2006 the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 10.4 per cent, compared to 6.8 per cent for people without disabilities.

In 2006, 54 per cent of people with disabilities were in the labour force compared to 80 per cent of people without disabilities.

Ontarians with disabilities earn less than those without disabilities: $29,000 compared to $40,500 for those without disabilities.

Why It Matters

Creating a more accessible society will significantly improve the lives of Ontarians with disabilities. The Martin Prosperity Institute estimates that with the implementation of accessibility standards, employment income for people in Ontario with disabilities could increase overall by $618 million.

The improvements will also have a large impact on society as a whole. The Martin Prosperity Institute also estimates that with the implementation of accessibility standards, education levels of people with disabilities could better match those of people without disabilities, resulting in an $85 to $200 increase in Ontario's Gross Domestic Product per capita. Helping to lift this demographic out of poverty will benefit them as individuals and their families, as well as help to build a stronger economy in Ontario.

What We Have Achieved:

- Several of the accessibility standards have now come into effect. It means businesses and organizations in Ontario must take certain steps to become accessible to people with disabilities.
- The fully implemented standards will reduce a range of barriers and create greater opportunities for people with disabilities to participate more fully in society.

Building Stronger Communities

Breaking the cycle of poverty requires a community effort on the largest scale. Our government is committed to partnering with community organizations, the private sector, stakeholders and governments at all levels to bring to life initiatives, programs, services and other supports that can help to build strong communities and make lasting change to lift Ontarians out of poverty.

Supporting the Not-for-Profit Sector

The not-for-profit sector provides important services to families in our communities, including many that support Ontarians from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds. Many not-for-profit organizations work

on poverty reduction issues (e.g., employment services, settlement services) and provide support to families (e.g., child care, after school programs, seniors services and recreation programs). We are working to strengthen the sector's capacity so it can more effectively serve its clients in all areas, including helping to reduce poverty.

Why It Matters

Supporting a stronger not-for-profit sector will help build stronger communities and support many Ontarians in improving their lives.

Did You Know?

Ontario's not-for-profit organizations help drive our economy, contributing close to $50 billion – seven per cent of our Gross Domestic Product – and over one million jobs across the province. A further five million people volunteer their time in the not-for-profit sector.

Steps We Have Taken:

- The **Partnership Project** was launched in 2010 to strengthen the government's partnership with the not-for-profit sector. In March 2011, following an eight-month consultation process, the Partnership Project report was released. It provides a concrete set of six recommendations which have been adopted as the government's strategy to help renew, streamline, and modernize our relationship with the not-for-profit sector.

What We Have Achieved:

- In April 2011, the Partnership Project Office was established in the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to implement the report's recommendations and serve as a hub for collaboration around sector issues, both inside government and within the sector.
- A Partnership Forum has been set up as a venue for leaders from the public, not-for-profit and private sectors to discuss issues and guide the ongoing work of the Partnership Project.
- The **Partnership Grant Program** was launched in July 2011 to provide not-for-profit organizations with grants to support building better co-operation, communication and networks across the sector.

Steps We Have Taken:

- We passed the **Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010** to modernize legislation governing not-for-profit corporations governed by Ontario's Corporations Act.
- The act is targeted to come into force on July 1, 2013. Existing not-for-profit corporations will have a three-year transition period to bring their by-laws and other documents up to date.

What We Have Achieved:

- When it is proclaimed, the new Not-For-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 will benefit a wide variety of not-for-profit corporations including those that are focused on reducing poverty and that provide services and resources for Ontarians in need, such as food, housing and employment assistance.
- Upon proclamation, the new act will:
  - Simplify the incorporation process
  - Improve corporate governance and accountability (e.g., provide a statutory duty of care for directors)
  - Provide more rights for members (e.g., more remedies, greater access to financial records)
  - Clarify that not-for-profit corporations can engage in commercial activities if they support the corporation's not-for-profit purposes
  - Provide a simpler financial review process in place of an audit in specified circumstances
  - Align with modern legislation in other Canadian jurisdictions.

Steps We Have Taken:

- The government is supporting the Ontario Centre of Excellence in their innovative **Social Innovation Partnership Challenge** aimed at building new partnerships between industry, the academic community and the not-for-profit sector to develop services, products and business models that have social benefits and create positive change.
- In particular, the Partnership Challenge supports collaborative projects between not-for-profit organizations, industry and academic partners that tackle tough social issues like alleviating poverty.

What We Have Achieved:

- A poverty reduction forum was held in June 2012 that brought together a range of organizations and stakeholders representing children and youth, seniors, people with disabilities, rural Ontarians, First Nations, and ethnic and racial minorities.
- The ideas generated by the forum evolved into proposals for collaborative projects that will target poverty reduction.
- Selected projects will:
  - Benefit not-for-profit organizations and community agencies, which will be able to access a highly skilled talent pool and leading research and technology
  - Create partnerships that will foster programs, services and approaches to assist in alleviating the social impact of poverty.

Steps We Have Taken:

- We are investing in the **Social Venture Exchange** – an Ontario-focused private investment platform that will help connect social enterprises with the potential for having positive social impact with investors and service providers to help make it a reality.
- The Social Venture Exchange is focused on the growing number of not-for-profit and for-profit ventures in Ontario that wish to advance their mission, grow their enterprises, and create a positive impact, but lack access to capital. The Social Venture Exchange will act as a single access point to link social ventures that are seen to have positive social and/or environmental impact with capital investors.

What Will be Achieved:

- The Social Venture Exchange will help direct $10 million in 2013 to a number of social enterprises in Ontario.
- It will provide an online platform to bring together investors with a desire to invest for social impact with innovative ventures in need of support.
- The Social Venture Exchange could support ventures that create opportunities to break the cycle of poverty in various areas and segments of society, including affordable housing, employment services, food security, education, First Nations, and new Canadians.

Steps We Have Taken:

- The government developed the **Facility Partnerships Guideline** to help school boards partner with community organizations for shared used of school facilities during school hours.

Why It Matters

Having more community services located in neighbourhood schools increases access to a range of service for students and the broader community.

PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT IN SCHOOL INCREASES ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has been sharing space at Midland Secondary School (Simcoe County District School Board) since early 2011. The location offers the public easy access to the agency's full spectrum of services, including vaccines, healthy lifestyle promotion, family and prenatal health, protection from health hazards and infectious disease and food and water safety.

"Our intent in moving to this site is to provide a highly visible location where the public can walk, take transit or bicycle to the health unit office," Medical Officer of Health Dr. Charles Gardner said around the time of the move. "It means our clients will be able to choose healthy, active transportation to reach us and reduce automobile emissions, both of which are long term priorities with public health.

What We Have Achieved:

- Around the province, school boards have successful facility partnerships that enable boards to offset facility costs as well as improve educational opportunities and community connections.
- We are encouraging boards and their community partners to build on this success by expanding the number of partnerships in a way that is transparent, sustainable and supportive of student achievement and well-being.

Social Assistance

The government provides basic financial assistance for Ontarians in need. This assistance helps to address some of the challenges these individuals face. It is important to make sure Ontarians in need have access to a basic level of financial assistance, while at the same time supporting individuals to successfully transition to financial independence.

Social Assistance Rates

The government has increased **social assistance** rates eight times since 2003. The most recent increase, announced as part of the 2012 Ontario Budget, includes a one per cent increase to the adult basic needs and maximum shelter allowances for Ontarians who rely on Ontario Works, the Ontario Disability Support Program and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities.

Did You Know?

Social assistance rates have increased by 14.9 per cent since 2003.

ALL HANDS ON DECK

A COLLECTIVE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

Although much has been achieved in the first four years of the strategy, much more work remains to be done and we cannot do it alone. Since the launch of our Poverty Reduction Strategy, we have called on the federal government to take the following actions:

- Increase the Working Income Tax Benefit to $2,000 a year per family.
- Increase the National Child Benefit Supplement by a maximum of $1,200 per child.

An increase to the National Child Benefit Supplement of $1,200 per child and increasing the Working Income Tax Benefit to $2,000 per family is estimated to lower the child poverty rate to 12.6 per cent by 2013. Without these increases, it is estimated the child poverty rate would be 14.6 per cent by 2013.

Going forward, the fight against poverty must be taken on a national scale. Increased partnership with the federal government would leverage Ontario's investments, resulting in much more being achieved for low-income children and families. Poverty does not stop at provincial borders – it affects all corners of this country.

It makes sense for poverty reduction to be elevated to a federal/provincial/territorial goal with the creation of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy that can harness Canada's collective resources and expertise to find lasting solutions.

CONCLUSION

In the past four years, the Poverty Reduction Strategy has made a real difference in improving the lives of Ontarians in need. In the midst of one of the worst global economic downturns, our strategy has served to buffer disadvantaged Ontarians, who would not have fared as well without our government's investments. Some 40,000 children have been lifted out of poverty since the visionary strategy was launched.

Key Investments

Critical investments under the strategy have helped Ontarians give their children the best start in life, helped parents keep a secure roof over their heads, helped the unemployed find jobs or upgrade their skills, and helped build communities with stronger safety nets and tools to help families rise out of poverty.

The government is currently investing over $250 million annually in healthy child development programs across Ontario. It means more children are receiving the support they need to get the best start in life, make a smooth transition to school and have access to nourishing food so they are ready to learn when they get there.

Making Gains

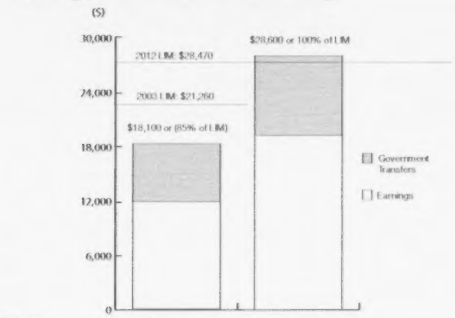
Ontarians are better off as a result of the broad achievements of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. For example, a single mother with a young child, working full time at minimum wage and accessing all available benefits was living above the poverty line in 2012. The same single mother would have been living below the poverty line back in 2003.

Making a Difference

INCOME FOR A WORKING SINGLE MOTHER AND CHILD 2003 AND 2012

As a result of investments and the government's Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, a single mother with a young child working full time at minimum wage and accessing all available benefits is above the estimated Low Income Measure (LIM) for 2012. This single mother would have an annual after-tax income of about $28,600 which is just above the LIM as compared with an after-tax income of $18,100 or more than $2,000 below the LIM in 2003.

Single parent with a young child, working full time at the minimum wage



Notes:
1) Government transfers include federal and provincial child benefits and tax credits.
2) The 2012 LIM is a forecast. Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance

Looking Ahead

Social Assistance Review

The government committed to the first in-depth review of social assistance in 20 years, by setting up the **Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario**, headed by the Honourable Frances Lankin and Dr. Munir Sheikh.

The Commission released its final report Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario on October 24, 2012. The report provides a wide range of recommendations to make the social assistance system more responsive and fair for all clients, easier to access and understand, and more effective in connecting people to jobs.

The report offers a bold vision for change and we support the objectives described in the report so that we can reach our goal of reducing poverty by increasing opportunities for Ontarians.

But the report makes it clear there are no simple solutions to successfully transform Ontario's social assistance programs.

That is why we will take the time, working with our partners – both inside and outside of government – to discuss the implications of system transformation and begin creating a responsible framework for change.

In the meantime, we will be taking early steps to make a positive difference in the lives of social assistance clients. This will include:

- Making improvements to social assistance employment services for those who are able to work.
- Working with employers to better connect clients and people with disabilities to the workforce.
- Determining the best ways to simplify and streamline the system by modernizing the way services are delivered.

To read the final report of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario, visit: http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/home

Ontario Youth Strategy

To make a lasting difference in the lives of youth we are working with our partners to develop a province-wide, long-term Ontario Youth Strategy.

Building on the foundations of the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence report, *Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development*, and the 2012 Youth Action Plan, we have committed to the development of a Youth Strategy. The strategy will articulate a set of common priorities for Ontario's youth in order to help them transition successfully to adulthood by improving the coordination of actions in support of youth across the province. The strategy will also identify outcomes and indicators to measure progress toward these outcomes.

As part of this strategy we will also support the creation of Local Youth Planning Tables and tools to support the measurement and evaluation of community programs.

We want to ensure our collective actions are achieving the best results for young people.

The Next Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Poverty Reduction Strategy is a long-term commitment of our government. But the fight to lift Ontarians out of poverty transcends the mandate of any one government. When it was enacted, the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009 received unanimous support from all parties in the legislature. The renewal of the strategy is set out in legislation. The government is required to develop a new strategy with specific targets to reduce poverty every five years. Public consultation is a key requirement in the renewal process. The voices of people who are at higher risk of living in poverty, including single mothers, seniors, individuals with disabilities, immigrants and Aboriginal peoples must be included in the task of renewing the strategy to address existing and future needs.

The government is deeply committed to the goals that every renewed Poverty Reduction Strategy must set specific targets and initiatives designed to improve the economic and social conditions of Ontarians living in poverty. We must continue to focus on the importance of communities, supporting children, youth and families and collaborating with a broad range of stakeholders and partners. The ongoing economic challenges demand that we move forward with determination, innovation and vigour to renew the strategy so we can succeed in making a lasting difference to the lives of Ontarians in need.

APPENDIX

MEASURES, INDICATORS AND OUTCOMES

Setting an ambitious target of lifting 25 per cent of kids out of poverty over five years and reporting on our progress is an important component of our Poverty Reduction Strategy. Understanding where progress is being made and where we need to focus more attention helps to guide our efforts.

About the Indicators

A total of eight indicators were selected during the development of the strategy which, when taken together, provides a better understanding of the Poverty Reduction Strategy's impact. These eight indicators of opportunity cover key aspects such as income levels, education, health, housing and standard of living.

Our eight indicators are:

1. School Readiness
2. High School Graduation Rates
3. Educational Progress
4. Birth Weights
5. Low Income Measure (LIM)
6. Depth of Poverty
7. Standard of Living
8. Ontario Housing Measure

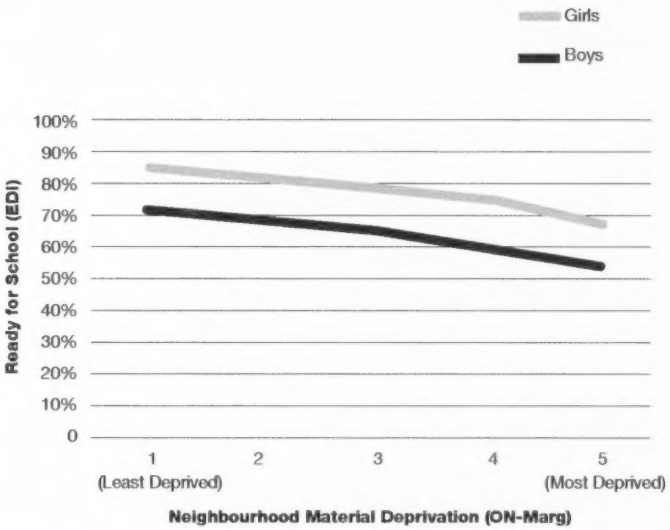
Statistics Canada data for our income-based indicators lag by 18 months. The impact of our investments on our Low Income Measure, Depth of Poverty, Standard of Living and Ontario Housing Measure indicators are for the second year (2010) of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Indicator 1: School Readiness

Children have a better chance to succeed as students when they come to school ready to learn. They need to be healthy. They need social and emotional competencies. They need language, thinking and communications skills, and the general knowledge to participate in and benefit from their educational experiences. This indicator is based on the Early Development Instrument (EDI), a population-based measure of children's developmental health and readiness to learn at school.

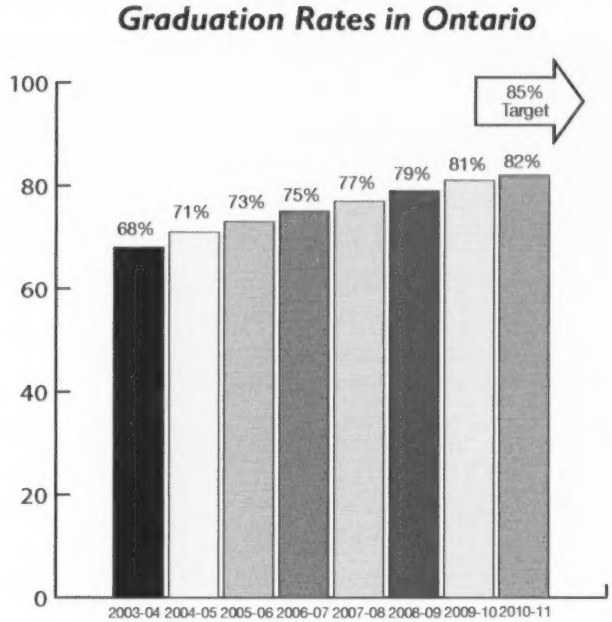
Administered in Senior Kindergarten, it measures children's competencies and skills contributing to their developmental health at school entry in five areas: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and general knowledge and communication skills. The data is gathered from one-third of Ontario school boards each year. As a result, it takes three years to cover the province.

As reported in previous annual progress reports, between 2007 and 2009, 71.5 per cent of children surveyed showed no vulnerabilities. This means that most children in Ontario are doing well, but there are some who are vulnerable to poorer outcomes and who may need additional supports to succeed at school.



Between 2010 and 2012, 72.4 per cent of Ontario children were ready to succeed, including 79.4 per cent of girls and 65.6 per cent of boys. Girls tend to be more ready for school than boys at school entry. When we consider neighbourhood deprivation, children in more materially deprived neighbourhoods tended to be less ready to succeed at school entry.

There are numerous services and supports in place across Ontario to support healthy child development prior to school entry. Parent and child development programs play an important part in supporting children to get the best possible start in life. Together, programs such as Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Ontario Early Years Centres, Parent and Family Literacy Centres, Infant Hearing Program, Preschool Speech and Language Program and Infant Development Program offer a range of parent support, screening, assessment and treatment services to help children succeed in school and in life.



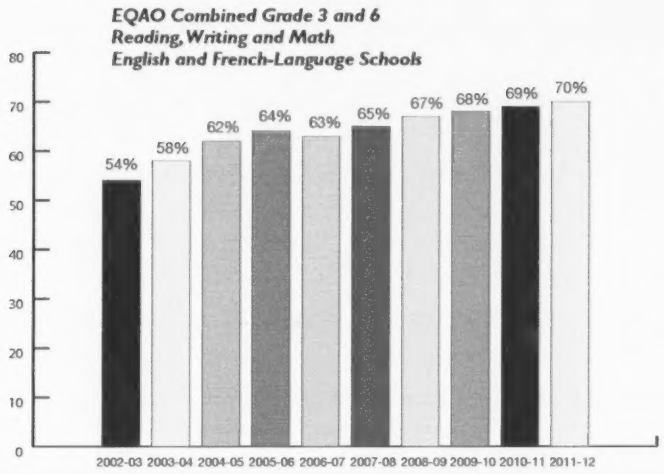
Source: Ontario Ministry of Education

Indicator 2: High School Graduation Rates

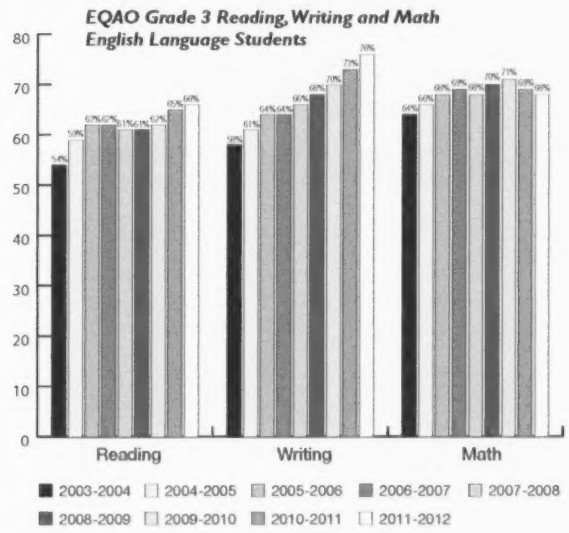
In our knowledge- and skills-based economy, graduating from high school is more important than ever before. Young people with a secondary school diploma have improved chances for a better job and more earning power throughout their lives.

This indicator represents the percentage of high school students who have earned an Ontario Secondary School Diploma in each graduating year. Ontario's graduation rate measures the percentage of a cohort of students who graduate within five years of having started Grade 9.

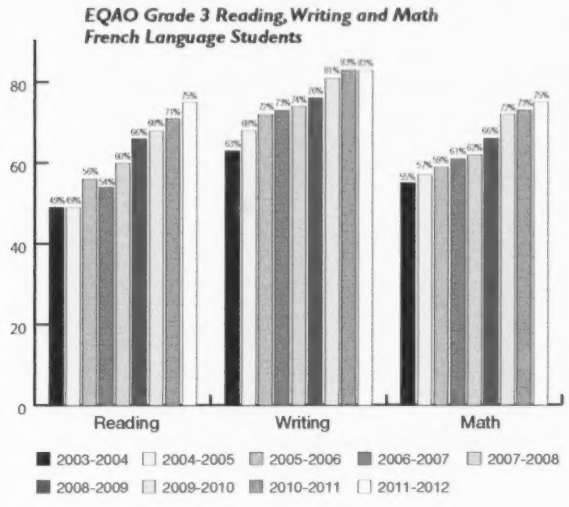
For the 2010-11 school year, 82 per cent of high school students earned their secondary school diploma – a jump of 14 percentage points from 68 per cent in 2003-04. This means that 93,000 more students have graduated than would have had the rate remained at the 2003-04 level.



Source: Ontario Ministry of Education based on EQAO data



Source: Ontario Ministry of Education based on EQAO data



Source: Ontario Ministry of Education based on EQAO data

Indicator 3: Educational Progress

Province-wide assessment is one important measure of children's progress in literacy and numeracy, and enables us to pinpoint areas for improvement and to target support to where it is needed most. This measure provides critically important information on planning for student learning and achievement.

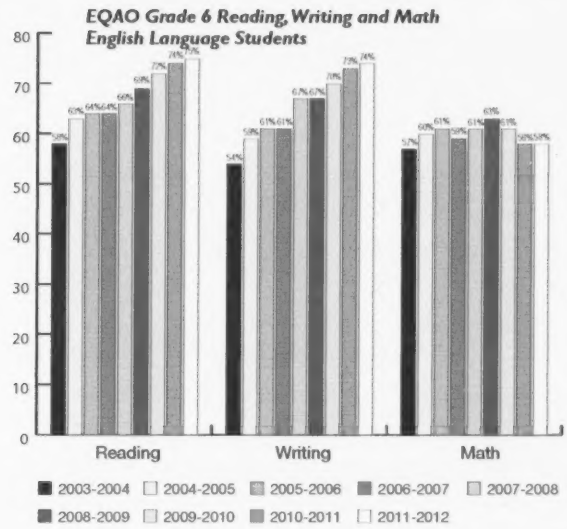
This indicator is based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) provincial assessment of student achievement as measured against the learning expectations in Ontario's curriculum. It reflects the overall results on the Grades 3 and 6 reading, writing and math assessments.

Over 55,000 additional Grade 3 and Grade 6 students are meeting or exceeding the provincial standard in reading, writing and math, compared with the results of nine years ago.

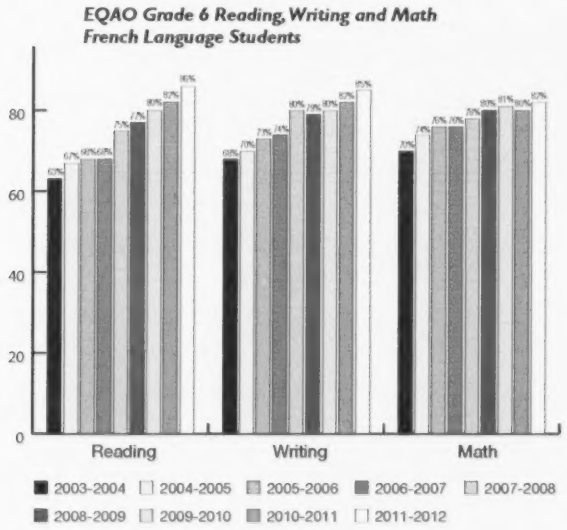
In 2011-12, 70 per cent of Grade 3 and Grade 6 students are mastering the reading, writing and math skills that will lead to success in high school, postsecondary education and the workforce. This is up from our 2008-09 baseline of 67 per cent and represents a 16-percentage point increase since 2002–03.

Grade 3 Achievement

For the 2011-12 assessment of English language students, 66 per cent of the Grade 3 students in reading, 76 per cent in writing, and 68 per cent in math were at or above the provincial standard on EQAO assessments. Amongst French language students, 75 per cent of the Grade 3 students in reading, 83 per cent in writing, and 75 per cent in math were at or above the provincial standard on EQAO assessments. It should be noted that the provincial standard is a Level 3 or approximately a "B" grade.



Source: Ontario Ministry of Education based on EQAO data



Source: Ontario Ministry of Education based on EQAO data

Grade 6 Achievement

For the 2011-12 assessment of English language students, 75 per cent of the Grade 6 students in reading, 74 per cent in writing and 58 per cent in math were at or above the provincial standard on EQAO assessments. Amongst French language students, 86 per cent of the Grade 6 students in reading, 85 per cent in writing, and 82 per cent in math were at or above the provincial standard on EQAO assessments.

Since 2003, the government has reduced class sizes in the primary grades, increased teacher professional learning and raised the graduation rate. Across Ontario, 400 new, publicly funded schools have been built and another 170 are planned and/or underway.

In September 2012, about 122,000 of Ontario's four- and five-year-olds, at approximately 1,700 schools, are benefiting from full-day kindergarten. In September 2014, full-day kindergarten will be available to all of Ontario's four- and five-year-olds in publicly funded elementary schools.

Students who achieve early success in school are more likely to perform well later in school and go on to postsecondary education. This ensures that Ontario will have the skilled workforce to compete in the global economy.

Indicator 4: Birth Weights

Healthy children have more opportunity to succeed in virtually every aspect of life from early childhood to adulthood.

This indicator represents the percentage of newborns born at a healthy weight for their gestational age. Research indicates that babies born to low-income families more often have below normal birth weights, which can put them at a higher risk for poor future health outcomes. In 2010–12, 80.7 per cent of Ontario-born babies were born at a healthy weight[2].

[2] Source: BORN ONTARIO (Niday Perinatal Database)

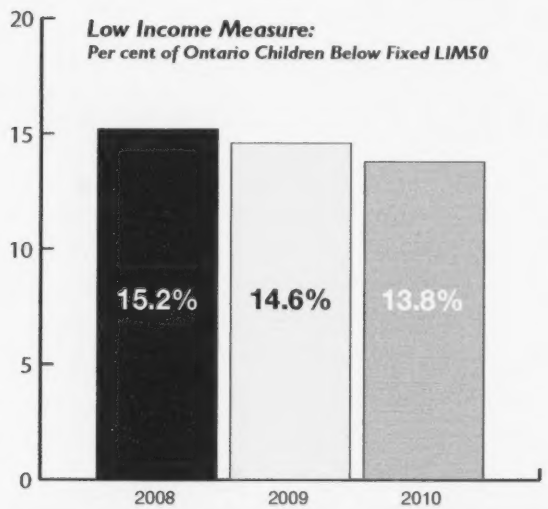
Indicator 5: Low Income Measure

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy uses Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure (LIM50) fixed to a base year of 2008 to assess progress in reducing child poverty. The LIM50 is defined as the percentage of children under 18 living in a household with an income less than 50 per cent of the median adjusted household income.

The goal of the Poverty Reduction Strategy is to reduce the number of children living in poverty by 25 per cent over five years, which means lifting 103,000 children above the poverty line.

In 2010, 13.8 per cent of all Ontario children were below the fixed LIM, down from 14.6 per cent in 2009 and 15.2 per cent in 2008[3]. The number of children in poverty was 372,000 in 2010, down from 393,000 in 2009 and 412,000 in 2008. In 2010, the second year into the strategy, child poverty was down by about 40,000.

- The low-income rate of children in female lone-parent families was 35.6 per cent in 2010, up slightly from 35.1 per cent in 2009, but down sharply from 43.7 per cent in 2008.
- The rate for children in two-parent families was 10.7 per cent in 2010, down from 11.4 per cent in 2009 and 10.3 per cent in 2008.



Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance based on Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics

- The rate for children in all other families (male lone-parent families and families headed by a grandparent or other relative) was 13.8 per cent in 2010, down from 15.3 per cent in 2009 and 15.4 per cent in 2008.
- Most children are in two-parent families (82 per cent) and female-lone parent families (12 per cent). About 6.0 per cent of children are in other families.

The 25-in-5 target requires raising 103,000 children out of poverty by 2013. While Ontario has made early progress, the temporary Ontario Sales Tax Transition Benefit reduced child poverty by about 20,000 in 2010. Without the benefit, the child poverty rate would have been unchanged at 14.6 per cent.

Recessions and Low-Income Trends

The recent global recession has had an ongoing impact on incomes and household circumstances in 2010. The real market incomes of the poorest fifth of Ontario households with children in 2010 were $1,900 lower on average compared to 2008. The drop in market incomes has had a negative impact on indicators of low-income.

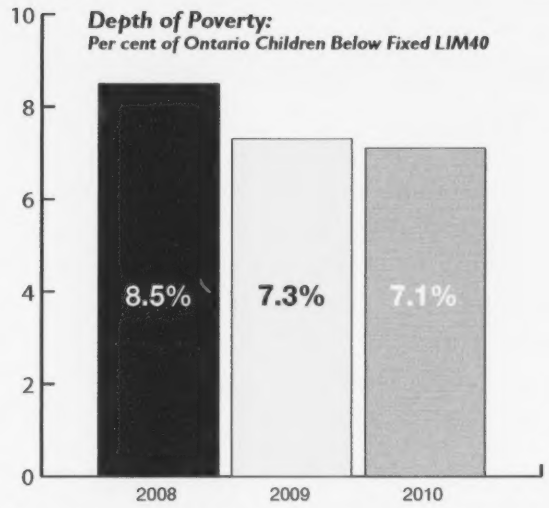
The recent recession has affected the market opportunities of the poor similar to the impact of previous economic downturns. The real average market income of the bottom fifth of all families fell by 23 per cent from 2007 to 2010. This was more than the 19 per cent drop in the early 1980s recession but less than the 43 per cent drop in the early 1990s downturn. Despite the sharp decline in market income, the children's low-income rate has fallen this period whereas it rose during the early 1980s recession and 1990s recession.[4]

Higher government transfers and lower income taxes have helped reduce poverty recently. The increase in the Ontario Child Benefit alone raised the average real income of the bottom fifth of households by about $900, equal to about half the decline in market income.

Without the Poverty Reduction Strategy, it is estimated that 77,000 more children would have been in poverty in 2010 and the low-income rate nearly three percentage points higher than the actual rate.

[3] The fixed LIM or LIM50 is Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure line in 2008 updated using the CPI for 2009 and 2010. For a single person household, the line was 18,668 in 2008, 18,717 in 2009 and 19,061 in 2010. To obtain the line for other household sizes, multiply the single-person line by the square root of household size. Note that Statistics Canada revised the population and income estimates for the years 2006 to 2009. As a result, the fixed LIM lines for 2008 and 2009 have changed slightly from previous annual reports.

[4] Low income in this sentence is referring to the after-tax Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs). The fixed LIM is not available for these earlier periods but both measures have similar trends because both are updated using the CPI. The children's LICO rate has dropped 1.6 per cent from 2007 to 2010.



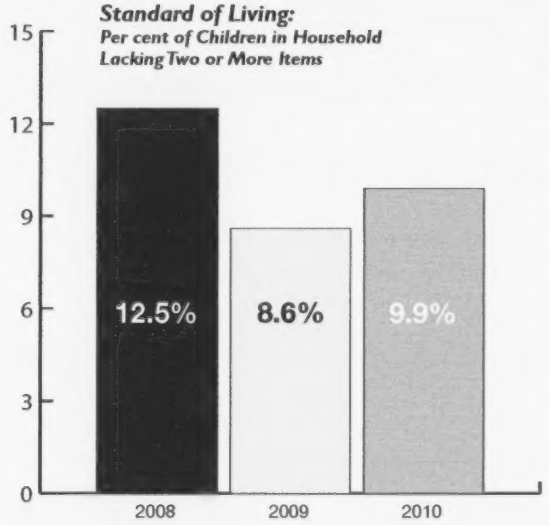
Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance based on Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics

Indicator 6: Depth of Poverty

Some families living in deep poverty face severe challenges breaking the cycle of poverty and building better futures for their children. The depth of poverty indicator tells us how Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy is improving the well-being of those living in deep poverty.

This indicator is based on the Low Income Measure (LIM40) fixed to a base year of 2008. It represents the percentage of children under 18 living in a household with an income less than 40 per cent of the median adjusted household income.[5]

In 2010, 7.1 per cent of Ontario children were in deep poverty, down slightly from 7.3 per cent in 2009 and 8.5 per cent in 2008. The number of children in deep poverty was 190,000 in 2010, down 41,000 since 2008.

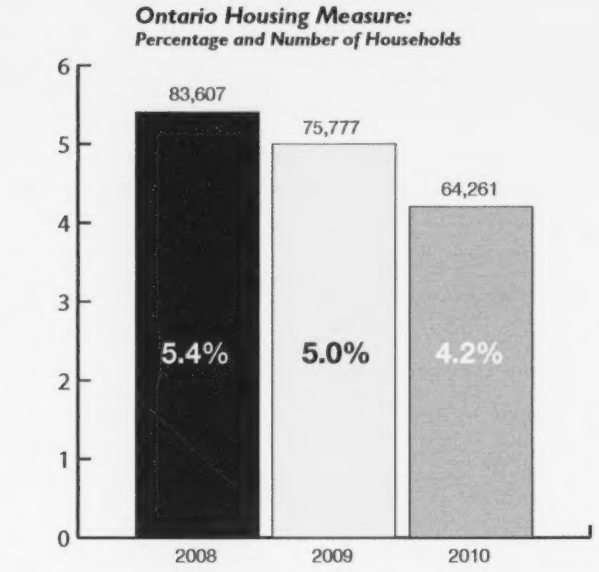


Indicator 7: Standard of Living

This indicator measures how many people cannot afford a standard of living that most Ontarians take for granted based on a list of 10 questions on select necessities. Households are deprived or poor according to this indicator if they do not have and cannot afford two or more of the items in the list. This indicator was developed for the Poverty Reduction Strategy by the Caledon Institute and the Daily Bread Food Bank, in partnership with Statistics Canada and the Ontario government.

In 2010, 9.9 per cent of children were in households lacking two or more items, up from 8.6 per cent in 2009, but down from 12.5 per cent in 2008. The all-person's deprivation rate was 9.4 per cent in 2010, down from 9.9 per cent in 2009 and 11.1 per cent in 2008.

[5] The adjustment is for household size. The lines for 2009 and 2010 are obtained by applying CPI inflation to adjust for cost-of-living increases.



Source: Statistics Canada

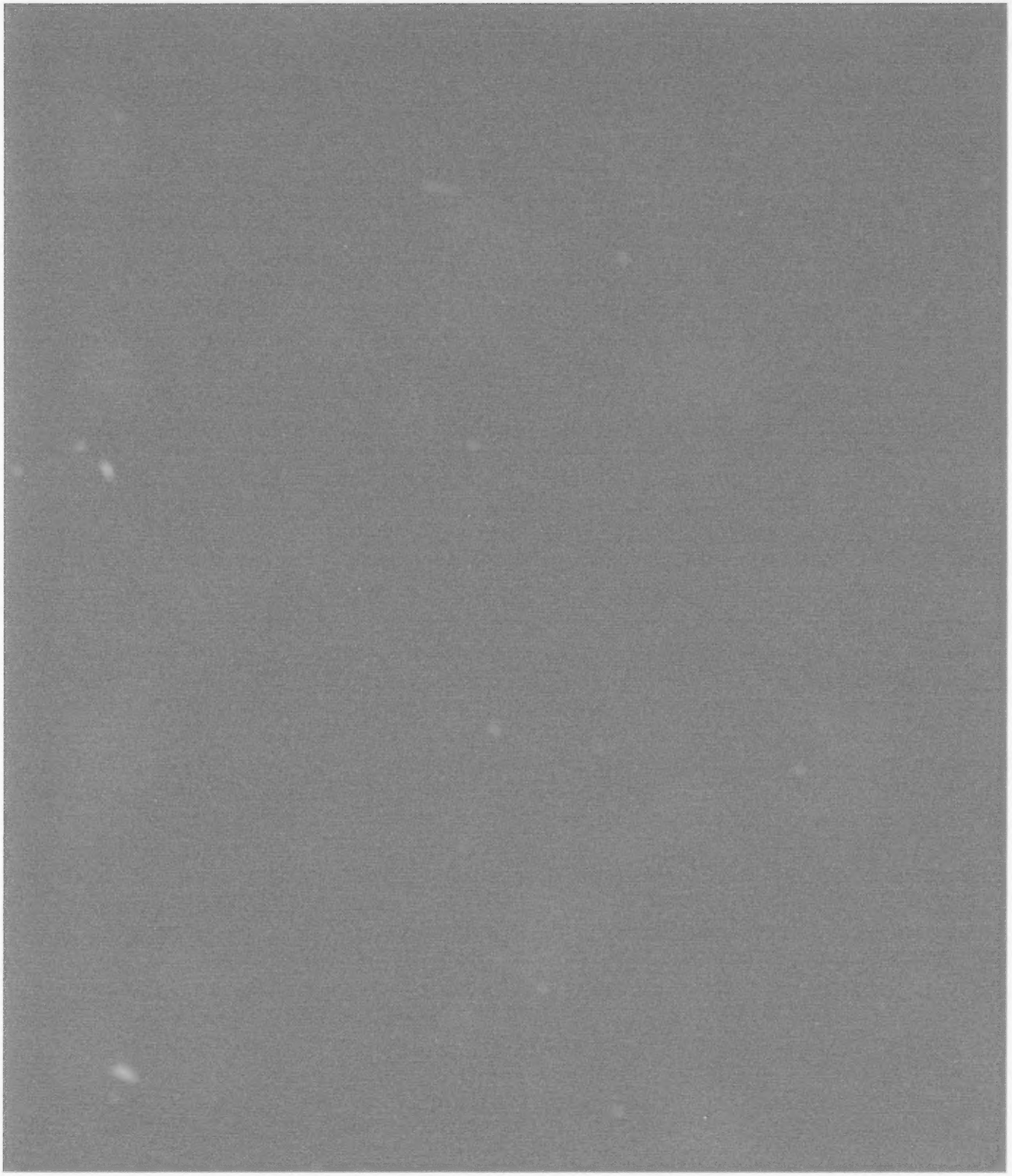
Indicator 8: Ontario Housing Measure

Children have better chances to thrive and grow – emotionally, mentally and academically – when they live in safe, stable housing. This measure tells us how many low-income households with children have housing costs that are disproportionately high relative to household income, which can affect children's ability to thrive and grow even in a supportive environment.

The Ontario Housing Measure lays out the percentage of households with children under 18 that have incomes below 40 per cent of the median household income (LIM40) and spend more than 40 per cent of their income on housing.

In 2010, the percentage of children under 18 living in households with incomes below 40 per cent of the LIM40 declined from 5.0 per cent in 2009 to 4.2 per cent.

Notes:



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